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ABSTRACT

A proposed plan outlined in this speech divides the school year into three instructional units of 12 weeks each during which time student attendance is required. Three interim units of 15 work days and five vacation days are scheduled in April, August, and December. These interim units are designed to be used by students for remedial work, enrichment, acceleration activities, or for vacation. Under this plan, teachers can choose among five basic areas of differentiated activities: (1) teaching, (2) curriculum development and evaluation, (3) consulting or training teacher, (4) inservice training, and (5) no contract obligations during the interim period. (Author/MLF)

NASSP Convention
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PROPOSAL

THE CIRCULAR SCHOOL YEAR

by

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WHY?

Many Boards of Education and community leaders are looking for ways to save school construction and operation costs. Faced with minimal support of educational programs at the national and state level, educators are frantically examining programs that save money. Much attention has been focused toward the use of facilities during the entire year--the year-round school. Most of the more than two dozen models in existence now reflect this money-saving dimension.

The proposed Laguna Beach Plan is not necessarily based on this concept. In fact, unless a companion plan of differentiated staffing is implemented it probably will cost more. However, it is designed to meet the needs of the students, staff and district without regard to financial constraints.

In making a needs assessment of the district, too many factors were brought to light that indicated needs were not being met adequately by the existing system. Some of these factors are listed below:

1. Changes in curriculum content caused by such factors as excessive school failures, knowledge explosion, expanded leisure time, need for vocational training,

preparation for success in college and summer learning loss.

2. Changes in management concepts through shared decision-making in curriculum development, demand for accountability, realistic in-service training, cross sharing of teacher expertise, time for appropriate planning, the challenge to implement research, the development of differentiated staffing models and time for evaluation and reassessment.

3. Changes in students' interests and needs causes us to look at our program of remediation, enrichment, and acceleration, the continuous progress with appropriate placement of students' techniques and relevance of curriculum.

4. Changes in the demands of the public add to the factors of efficient use of school facilities, cost accounting for the development of our product and the need for confidence through realistic evaluation.

These considerations have answered the question, "Why?" for our district. A study of alternatives to better solve these issues was instituted in early 1970. Consideration of a model independent of program and methodology was specified. As a result, a proposed model was developed. Before we examine this model we should first understand a little more about the district for which it is intended.

THE DISTRICT

Laguna Beach Unified School District, housing nearly 3,000 students, is composed of five schools: Aliso, El Morro and Top of the World Elementary, Thurston Intermediate and Laguna Beach High School. The student population is distributed almost equally in each grade (K-12). Each grade contains between 225 and 250 students.

The communities of Laguna Beach and South Laguna occupy a narrow coastal strip in Orange County between the ocean and a range of steep rising hills. The District is located midway between Los Angeles and San Diego. This geographic isolation has provided for a unique community expression in the fact of the ever exploding problems of suburbia.

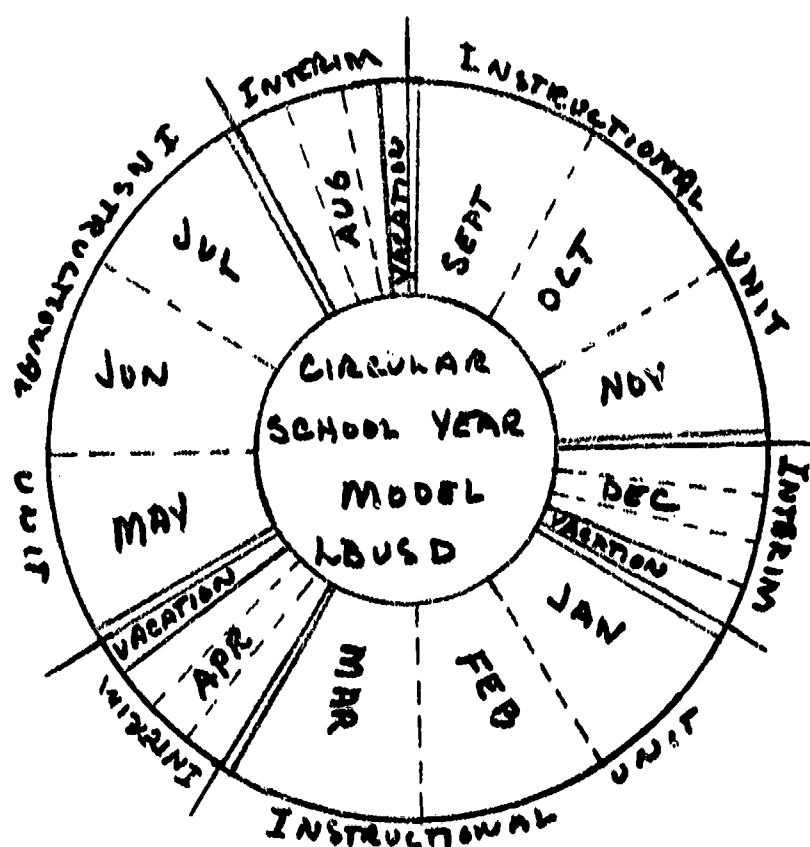
The Board of Education has committed the District to a performance curriculum goal emphasizing the individualization of instruction to be reached within the next five years.

Two of the schools have developed highly innovative programs. The intermediate school has developed a pupil-centered program utilizing a daily demand flexible schedule, team-teaching, and a non-graded structure. A performance curriculum and a differentiated staff is being developed under a Federal Education Professions Development Act grant. The Top of the World Elementary School has developed an ungraded curriculum program, in which teacher roles are differentiated on the basis of an analysis of teacher function with students.

Recently, the District has been approved for an increase of the EPDA allotment for the second phase of the project. Concurrently, the American Institutes of Research in conjunction with the U.S.O.E. has selected Laguna Beach as one of the seven school districts to be used in this five year evaluation study of innovative schools. Students in grades three through eight will be followed during the next five year period.

THE MODEL

The Model shown below basically provides time and staff for the resolution of the needs listed above. Time, that specific allotments are made to work with recognized problems, and staff, in that the highly trained professional staff is used year-round on a differentiated task basis.



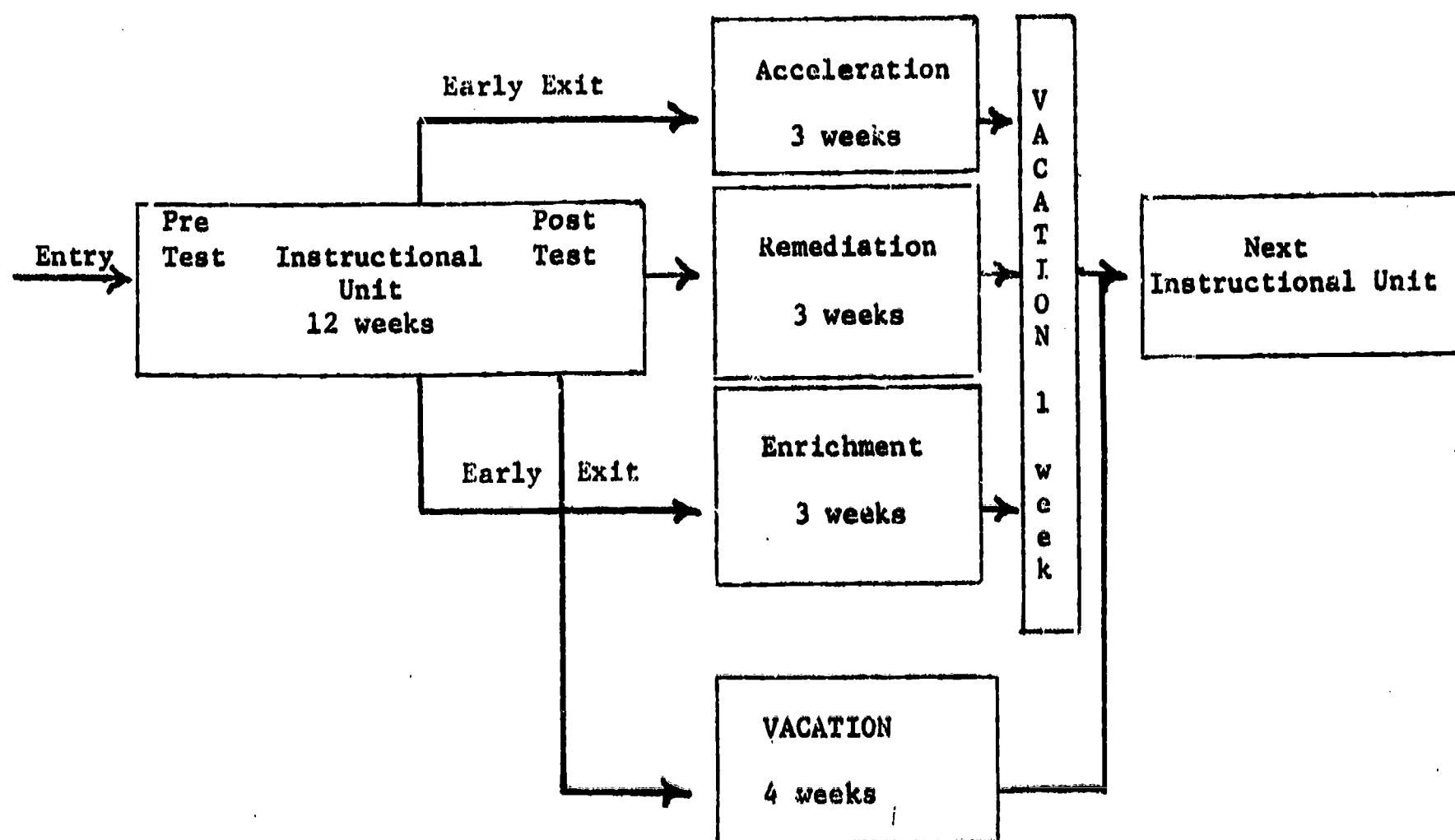
THE SCHOOL YEAR

The school year is divided into three Instructional Units of 12 weeks each (60 days). Three Interim Units of four (4) weeks each are provided in between. An Interim is composed of fifteen (15) days work time and five (5) days vacation time. Additional legal and school holidays are provided for in the master calendar. A sample calendar is provided in Appendix A.

ACTIVITIES PROVIDED FOR STUDENTS

The chart below indicates the pattern of student involvement in the Circular Year Model. Students are required to be in school during the Instructional Units but may exercise options in the use of the Interim Unit.

The Model provides for regular instruction but extends the use of time for remediation, enrichment and acceleration activities.



OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. Acceleration - Students moving out of the Instructional Unit at varying times will have the option for accelerated learning experiences. Auto-tutorial programs, labs, small group and other strategies will be employed. As soon as performance criteria are met for the next level, credit will be given.

Acceleration can be an economic feature by moving students through school in as much as a year's less time.

2. Remediation - Students who do not meet the performance criteria in the allotted time in the Instructional Units will have the option of small class or individual remedial learning experience during the following Interim. Credit for course work can be withheld until performance criteria are met.

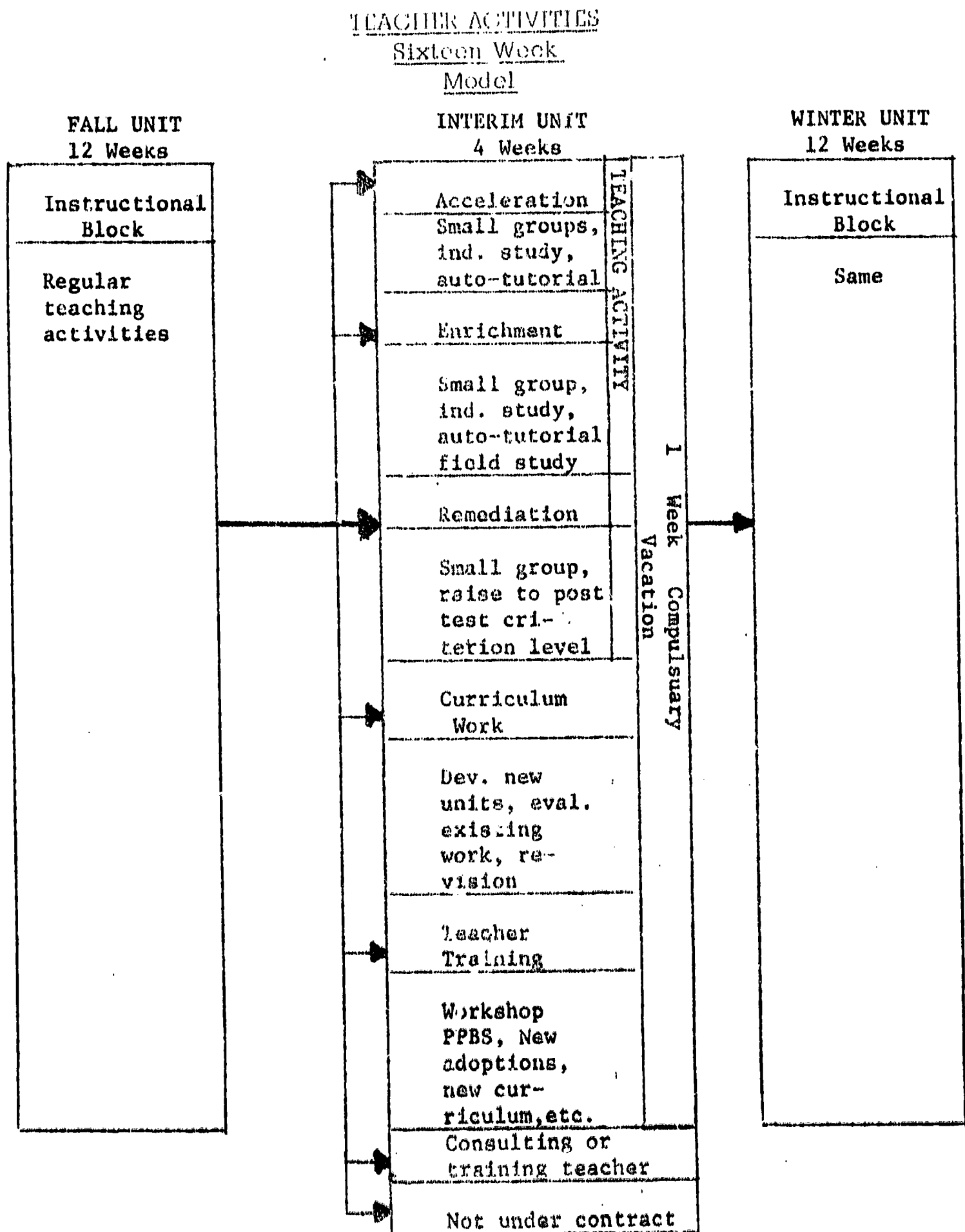
3. Enrichment - The District actively supports field study projects, such as week-long field trips to study the ecology of the Grand Canyon, Joshua Tree National Monument, or float trips down the Colorado River. Opportunity for in-depth experiences can all be developed during the Interim Unit. Examples are the High School Student Initiated Curriculum Program where students develop the curriculum content and special courses (art and music seminar, typing, vocational training) for students who do not normally have the time during the Instructional Unit.

4. Vacation - Another option is that of a vacation during the Interim Unit. Parents can plan vacations other than the traditional summer vacations.

OPTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Teachers are provided with five basic areas of differentiated activities.

These are teaching, curriculum development and evaluation, consulting or training teacher, in-service training and free from contract obligations.



1. Teaching - Teachers would be required to teach during the three Instructional Units. Options exist in that they contract for one, two or all three sessions. The use of special talents for a short time is provided in the Model. Every attempt should be made to limit other normally related teacher activities such as curriculum development and in-service to the Interim Unit.

In order to meet some of the student needs listed earlier, the Interim Unit is designed to extend student learning time. Emphasis is on small group work for remediation and acceleration. Student initiated curricular programs can be provided at this time. Short courses given two or three hours a day for five days are possible.

Enrichment activities such as extended field trips (already provided for in our district) can be made without interruption of the regular instructional program. The athletic program would not be a problem as contractual obligation can still be met.

2. Curriculum Development and Evaluation - Districts that have on-going programs of curriculum development must provide time other than summer or after school hours to reach optimum efficiency. The model provides time three times a year for development, application and the evaluation. By completing this cycle in a short four months time span, programs can be readily changed rather than wait until "next summer."

Staff assigned to special projects can be contracted for and program commitments made as a part of a continuous program of development and evaluation.

3. In-service Training - One of the needs identified is that of training teachers for the specific functions in a school district. Differentiated staffing, team teaching, daily demand flexible programs and many other factors require the district to provide

for training above and beyond the university teacher preparation programs.

After defining need and designating training as a part of their yearly contractual commitment, some teachers would be required to be involved during the Interim period. Present staff, teachers or administrators, and outside consultants can be used as instructors.

It is suggested that close liaison with local colleges and universities be established in order to provide credit for training activities during the Interim. Even the employment of college staff members for this purpose may be desirable.

4. Consulting or Training Teacher - As a result of our experiences with the E.P.D.A. project, we are receiving more and more requests for outside consulting with other districts. Both teachers and administrators have taken time away from regular activities to do this. The flexibility that the model contains will provide time with less interruption.

Utilizing the concept of our master teachers teaching other district personnel, we are providing time and pay for this activity.

5. Not Under Contract - During the contract negotiation teachers may opt not to work or not be assigned in the Interim Unit. This would provide for the current practice of three months off time. It is divided into three separate periods. It is hypothesized that by providing breaks more frequently, year end fatigue will be minimized.

Since the schools would be closed for one week three times a year, all staff members would have this mandatory vacation time.

STAFFING PATTERNS

One of the unique features of this Model is that a traditional program can be adapted to it. There is no additional cost involved if the Interims are not used. However, in our district we have defined the tasks listed above and need a model that will provide time for our staffing patterns. The concern for differentiation on the basis of time, task, and talent have forced us to look at a better way to accomplish our goals. Flexible use of manpower can be made during the school year. Short term specialists, mothers working part-time or short terms, and full-time (12 months) professionals all can have a place in the school program.

Some possible employment patterns are listed below:

Basic Contracts - Three Instructional Units 180-185 days.

It is proposed that current ratios in the district be maintained. Cost reduction may be seen by use of para-professionals, grouping strategies and auto-tutorial programs if this is an important criteria.

Part-time Contracts - One or two Instructional Units 60-85 days.

Teachers needed to teach for a limited time can be employed. Special Courses offered in only one Instructional Unit can be covered by a specialist for that period. Three one-unit instructors would equal one full-year contract. Time can be provided for staff members to attend college classes during their "off" time. Also the use of 2/5 or 3/5 contracts for designated periods of time can be provided for.

Extended Contracts - One or two Interim Units can be assigned.

These would be up to 15 days in length. Depending on the Basic or Part-time Contract, three Interim Units could be assigned. It is recommended that each staff member have the equivalent of one Interim off.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE CALENDAR

	<u>Begins</u>	<u>Ends</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Total Days</u>
<u>Fall Unit</u>	Sept. 1	Nov. 30	6	Instructional
Holidays	Sept. 6,9;Nov. 11, 12, 25, 26		- 6	60
First Interim	Dec. 1	Dec. 21	15	15
Interim Vacation	Dec. 22-24, 27-31		8	
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<u>Winter Unit</u>	Jan. 4	March 31	64	
Holidays	Feb. 14, 21-22	April 1	- 4	60
Second Interim	April 3	April 21	15	15
Interim Vacation	April 24	April 28	5	
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<u>Spring Unit</u>	May 1	July 27	64	
Holidays	May 29, 30; July 3-4		- 4	60
Third Interim	July 31	August 18	15	15
Interim Vacation	August 21	August 25		
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				225

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